DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 372 118 TM 021 959

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TITLE The Cognitive Value of College Women's Friendships.
PUB DATE Apr 94
NOTE 45p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, April 4-8, 1994).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Cognitive Processes; *College Students; *Females; *Friendship; Higher Education; Models; *Peer Relationship; Peer Teaching; Social Development; Stress Variables; Values

ABSTRACT

The cognitive nature, power, and educational value of college women's friendships were studied. As a means for dissolving the boundaries between the academic and intellectual, and as a place where autonomy and interdependence are in dynamic exercise, female friendships can provide a model for peer-assisted learning in higher education. Data were gathered through traditional cross-sectional survey means and through naturalistic and qualitative interview techniques. Subjects were 2 bisexual, 3 lesbian, and 38 heterosexual female college students. Six themes emerged from the interviews. For these college women, their conversations with a female friend served as: (1) a respite from academic stress and anxiety; (2) validation and support of their thinking and ideas; (3) testing sites for ideas; (4) risk-free testing sites for their ideas; (5) a source for different and diverse perspectives; and (6) sources of information and advice. Implications of the educative power of female friendships for higher education systems are discussed. (Contains 48 references.) (SLD)

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The Cognitive Value of College Women's Friendships

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Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association

New Orleans, LA

April 1994

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The Cognitive Value of College Women's Friendships

ABSTRACT

In the autumn of 1993 I began a project which is an attempt to assess the cognitive nature, power and educational value of college women's friendships. Through the use of a survey and interviews, I have come to some understanding of how college women may view the educational and intellectual value of their friendships with each other. Theoretically anchored to work I have done on John Dewey's concepts of sociality and individuality, and to the work of Janice Raymond (1986) and Lorraine Code (1991), this project is a means for understanding an aspect of women's friendships customarily ignored.

As a means for dissolving the boundaries between the academic and the intellectual, and as a place where autonomy and interdependence are in dynamic exercise, female friendships can provide the models for peer-assisted learning in higher education. As pointed out by Alexander, Gur, and Patterson (1974), peer-assisted learning is an "often neglected but potent resource inherent in a student population" (175). Their studies reaffirm the suspicion that arbitrary partnerships within pedagogical practices are problematic and that success of these learning partnerships was attributed to the friendship (p.179). What can educational research learn from female friendships regarding the development, function and practice of group or dyadic learning? Can educational research on group or collaborative learning glean anything from female friendship? Are there salient cognitive qualities that college women's friendships can offer to collaborative learning theorists? For example, if one of the more bothersome burrs in the collaborative learning theoretics is the conflict between individualistic tendencies and the requirement for interdependence, can college women's friendships' reconciliation of this tension provide any insight into this educational quandary?

The data from this fall's research have been gathered through traditional cross-sectional survey means and through naturalistic/qualitative interview techniques, and together with supportive evidence from the areas of educational philosophy and feminist pedagogy, I am hopeful that this paper brings to the you a new perspective on college women's friendships, and most importantly, brings to your attention the worth of these relationships as vehicles for your women students' intellectual growth.

The Cognitive Value of College Women's Friendships

Introduction

In 1989 the American Council on Education published Educating the Majority: Women Challenge Tradition in Higher Education, a book which explored the representation of women in higher education from the "conviction" that "for women to be fully and properly served in higher education, they must be represented in every aspect of institutional life" (Pearson, Shavlik, & Touchton, 1989, p. xi). The text's contributors explored a variety of issues affecting women in American colleges and universities. Issues such as women's diversity, the impact of feminist pedagogy in our classrooms, and most importantly, the "learning environments shaped by women" (Pearson, Shavlik, & Touchton, 1989). These learning environments included women's colleges, Catholic Women's Colleges, Women's and Black Women's Studies departments, but nowhere do any of the book's contributors examine the cognitive value of women's social relationships, and in particular, the educational potency of their female friendships. Could the "exceptional conditions" which are responsible for women's academic success in women's colleges also include chosen peer relationships, for example? No consideration is ever given to this possibility.

"The *New* Agenda for Women in Higher Education" published three years after Educating the Majority, continues along similar lines. To educate women, the authors submit, means "more than just admitting and graduating them. It means understanding the culture of women" (Shavlik & Touchton, 1992, p. 47). But nowhere in this agenda "revisited" do the authors suggest that in order to provide for an *intellectually* supportive climate for women, American colleges and universities should also take a close look at

what I suspect is an integral part of the "culture" of undergraduate women: their friendships with other college women.

In the autumn of 1993 I began a project which is an attempt to assess the cognitive nature, power and educational value of college women's friendships. Through the use of a survey and interviews, I have come to some understanding of how some college women view the educational and intellectual value of their friendships with each other. Theoretically anchored to work I have done on John Dewey's concepts of sociality and individuality, and to the work of Janice Raymond (1986) and Lorraine Code (1991), this project is a means for understanding an aspect of women's friendships customarily ignored. In addition, given the realities of our campuses, the workings of class, race, ethnicity and sexuality variables in the construction of these relationships was an important consideration. Yet unfortunately, due to the nature of the sampling population, little was gleaned about the learning attributes of college women of color, lesbians and working class college women.

The psychological, sociological and anthropological research literature on college women's friendships is scarce, to say the least, in part due to the relative newness of adult friendship research. Despite recognition of its importance by early Greek thinkers such as Aristotle and Plato (Rankin, 1914), research on adult friendship is a rather modern phenomenon. Though research on other relationships such as parent-child and children's peer relationships has been on- going in the United States since the 1920's, much of the research on adult friendship as a primary relationship has emerged in the past 25 years. Treated as attributes of individuals in earlier studies, adult friendship, as Adams & Blieszner (1992) note, has only recently been viewed as a relationship of significance. More recent studies begin to reflect a general interest in gender and sex differences in friendships (Sherrod, 1989; Reisman, 1990; Wright, 1982; and Aujett, et al, 1988) but have not had college women's friendships as a central point, let alone consider their cognitive worth. Researchers' attentions usually focus on the structure, processes and

phases of same-sex relationships, often considering an "essential nature" (Becker, 1987) of friendship between women, or a "central feature of women's friendships" (Aries & Johnson, 1983), such as their talk and conversations. Though some researchers like Becker (1987) use college women friends to consider relationship aspects deemed necessary for their friendships (aspects such as caring, trust, equality and respect), one is unlikely to find a study dedicated to the consideration of the cognitive power and learning character of college women's friendships, let alone *college* women's friendships. If mention is made of any cognitive or intellectual value of women's friendships, researchers, because their attention is fixed elsewhere, treat such observations as superfluous. For example, Hays (1989) ascertains that a benefit of same-sex friendships is "feeling intellectually stimulated and receiving useful information" (p. 25), yet we find no discussion of the implications of such a finding, nor does educational research appear to spring from such a finding.

Educational research on chosen peer relationships has followed a similar course. For example, some educational research on friendship has considered these relationships within the context college students' intellectual development (Perry, 1978; 1981; Clinchy & Zimmerman, 1982), but primarily as it applies to approaches to conceptions of learning and study habits. Often studies of friendships among college students seek to understand social support and emotional needs (Betz & Wohlgemuth, 1991), or as active elements of the cocurriculum (Baxter-Magolda, 1992). Research on cooperative learning and small group learning yields little insight into the educational character of college women's friendships specifically, and it is really only in the literature on peer-assisted learning that same-sex friendship emerges as a critical criteria for academic success (Alexander, et al, 1974).

As Linda Thompson (1992) defines feminist research, this particular project is so grounded. This is research *for* women and not *about* women. Though an ultimate goal of this project is to consider how institutions of higher learning can encourage and provide

undergraduate women the opportunities for such relationships in and outside their classrooms, I also hope that by shedding the proverbial research light on the cognitive and educational power of these relationships, undergraduate women will see their female friendships as more than emotional and social support relationships, thus validating the intellectual character of such relationships. Such validation will, I hope, empower undergraduate women friends.

The data from this fall's research have been gathered through traditional cross-sectional survey means and through naturalistic/qualitative interview techniques, and together with supportive evidence from the areas of educational philosophy and feminist pedagogy, I am hopeful that this paper brings to the you a new perspective on college women's friendships, and most importantly, brings to your attention the worth of these relationships as vehicles for your women students' intellectual growth.

Before I begin the discussion of the project's theoretical grounds and its research data, I should make note of several things. This project began in earnest a few years ago when I was unraveling John Dewey's philosophical musings on the constructed antithesis of the individual and group, of individuality and sociality. What developed from this was a clear link to feminist constructions of sociality and the individual's role within it. Once the connection was made, it was a relatively easy path to the assertion that feminist educational theorists could indeed reappropriate John Dewey's notions of the individual and sociality. What remained was a vehicle for the implementation of this construction. Feminist female friendship became the likely candidate when I realized that the qualities of such friendships, and the requirements for feminist pedagogy were in sync. Since feminist friendships between women were rich in the elements of feminist learning, it would seem logical to suggest that perhaps female friendships are essentially learning relationships.

My experience, and thus the heuristic character of this enterprise, suggested to me that there was something to this concern. I asked myself: Where do I take most of my

intellectual risks? Where do I try my hand at a new idea or a new theory? Where am I most likely to ingest and incorporate differing opinions? From whom do I feel I learn the most? The answers to these questions came rather easily to me: a woman named Martha and one named Meg. Close female friendships are my avenues to understanding, to communicating intelligently, to making sense and making meaning out of the world, to knowing. This project, then, is about a heuristic hunch.

Thus, I engage in an inquiry to help me understand the intellectual essence of college women's friendships, to help me to synthesize my intuition and experience with the personal knowledge of other women. I choose college women because it is a culture I understand, because it is a culture in which learning takes place, and because it is a culture which continues to struggle with the biases in its own traditions and the its unseen possibilities for change. My professional life is about these same struggles and about revealing the possible.

Theoretical Grounds

All feminisms struggle in some way or another to find the connections between self/individual and the group/sociality. It is indeed a struggle given the prevalence of Western dualistic ideas of the individual and society which place each at odds with the other. Feminisms, on the other hand, where "the personal is political," view self and identity as undeniably related to sociality and solidarity but find that in our personal, political and social worlds, this unity of concepts is largely absent. John Dewey's educational philosophy embodied a similar uneasiness with the tensions between the individual and sociality inherent in dualistic thinking.

In Meditations on Modern Political Thought Jean Bethke Elshtain remarks that feminism reflects the tensions between individualism and the common good and between individual rights and sociality" (1986,p.56). It is a reflection, notes Elshtain, which is

characterized by individuals with shared purposes and collective identities. Recent feminist scholarship fleshes out the tension Elshtain describes, suggesting that perhaps the tension between the individual and the group, in actuality, is thicker and more complex (Fox-Genovese, 1991). It is a tension which is the result of a tradition whose definition of the individual and of society sets the two in opposition. The use of the term "tension" alone connotes a contrariety, an antithesis between the two conceptions.

Dewey's conceptualization of the individual and of sociality, a term which I will use to refer to his notions of social life - life within groups, society at large and community, the fact and condition of being associated with others was about the coalescence of the individual and sociality, in a democracy as social state which unifies the individual and society. Dewey resolves the purported tension producing conflict between the individual and the social not by redefining these terms in the strictest sense but by untangling its tradition, dissecting its evolution and reassembling its definition. In many ways, Dewey's fusion of the individual and the social was a reconsideration necessary for the attainment of what he viewed as a moral and ethical social order.

In Democracy and Education (1916) Dewey writes that society and community are equivocal terms. Society, he says, is "conceived as one by its very nature" and the qualities which make up this oneness are those which are emphasized by solidarity. The qualities he attributes to this unity are "praiseworthy community of purpose and welfare, loyalty to public ends, mutuality of sympathy"(p.82). Society then, should have a shared alliance of interests, objectives and standards, and a concern for the common good. The implication is that in Dewey's society individual interests aren't antithetical to those of the group and taken a step further, that individual rights within the social unit are not suppressed nor are their 'rights' denied. In a very early paper, Dewey assembles a definition of democracy which injects an 'organic' interpretation of the individual and society. He views society as a whole and perfect organism existing for and by individuals. As an integral part of the whole, individuals are not socially isolated units but

rather constitute the spirit and will of all (Dewey, 1888). Though in his early writings Dewey's individual was defined within a Hegelian ideal and though Dewey's later writings don't have such a quality, he continued to believe that the ultimate interests of individuals and society were indeed reconcilable.

As several scholars such as Frederick Schultz (1969) have concluded, the differences between Dewey's "society" and "community" are unclear. In The Public and Its Problems (1927), a text in which Dewey directly addresses communal living, Dewey implies that a society can be transformed into a community, giving the impression that communal living is of a higher social order or, at the very least, a more advanced form of associated living.

In The Public and Its Problems (1927) Dewey writes that the "Great Society" can be transformed through intelligent action into the "Great Community." What he viewed as the "Great Society," was the 1920's pre-Depression America which was rapidly advancing in technology and industry. Dewey, however, saw such advancement as both positive and problematic. In effect, he reasoned, the rise of technology controlled by private profit and a "money culture," prevented the Great Society from acknowledging shared concerns and achieving shared ends. Acknowledging shared concerns and achieving mutual goals was a characteristic of local groups and communities which Dewey viewed as central and primary for the Great Community to evolve. What he envisioned was greater social cohesiveness, larger and an infinitely more inclusive union of human beings, across and between groups, across and between societies.

In order to transform "society" into "community," Dewey reasoned that members would have to be aware of and acknowledge mutual concerns and develop the method of intelligence to bring about mutually agreed upon ends. In effect, we have to be willing to see that our own individual concerns are similar to, if not the same as, those of others. To do this requires a method of intelligence reflecting the relationship between community and communication, and communication and intelligence. In the modern, technological

life, Dewey purported, a life focused on material gain is incapable of seeing and acknowledging the relevance of others' concerns to our own. He reasoned that our ability to become aware of our connections is ultimately what enables us to form communities:

> The planets in constellation would form a community if they were aware of the connections of the activities of each with those of others. (1927, p.25)

Thus, given that as humans we have the capacity for awareness - the capacity for intelligence - we should be able to engage in communal life. The suggestion is that individual intelligence will enable us to understand that sharing mutual concerns and aims is advantageous for all, and that this in itself, resolves the "conflict" between the individual and society. Though Dewey never explicitly says that in achieving "community" the individual and society are reconciled and made cohesive, my reading suggests that such is the case with Dewey.

It is important to state and make note of the fact that Dewey's "community" is not a static sociality. Dewey's community is always incomplete, always emerging. Each generation, in Dewey's view, should re-interpret the human condition, the passions, canons, and customs of the previous generations (Dewey, 1927, p.154). This makes sense given that Dewey's community is achieved through interaction, through participation in associated life. With each new generation, with each new advance in human intelligence, it becomes necessary to assess, to consider the value of a previous standard in order to progress personally and socially.

"Society" for Dewey is really "societies," the many and different forms of human association. Society is not a useful term for Dewey. Instead, he suggests in Individualism: Old and New (1929), that it is better to think in terms of "law, industry, religion, medicine, politics, art, education, philosophy" and to think of these in plural. He asks us to think of society not in "huge and large ways," but rather, as "avenues"-law, industry, religion, etc. It is via these avenues that we act upon the world and the world acts upon us (1929, p.166). These "avenues" are the conditions in which the multiple and varied forms

of interactions between individuals take place, according to Dewey. Thus, it would follow, that because human interactions vary from person to person, across time, and because these are not static interactions capable of being repeated precisely the same way twice, "society" can not be static either.

The requirement that individual personality develop with the influence of societal interactions suggests that Dewey firmly integrated individual and society. Thinking of the individual and society as opposing abstractions was for Dewey, a sure way of preventing true social thinking. In reality, he reasoned, the individual and the social are just categories through which we can gain an understanding of our worlds. To think of either the "individual" or "Society" as a singular, particular entity defined by some abstract, general idea, dismisses the facts of association and interaction. The individual is not the "spatially isolated thing our imagination inclines to take it to be," remarks Dewey (1927, p.187). Instead, Dewey's individual is a collection of particular potentialities which are elicited and validated through association. In a way, Dewey views the term "individual" as a general term which can not fully describe all of its particular manifestations. The beliefs, purposes, passions and actions of individuals are due to the influences of their associations and interactions, interactions which are not one-way transactions between the "individual" and an ambiguous "Society." Relations are between individuals and not between individuals and Society. And it is in this relation, this "social medium," that individuals live. It is through and because of associated life or "social medium" that individuals are "influenced by contemporary and transmitted culture, whether in conformity or protest. The culture of a period is a determining influence in the "arrangement of the native constituents of human nature. What is generic and the same everywhere is at best the organic structure of man, his biological make-up" (Dewey, 1927, p.195).

For Dewey, the idea that human nature is inherently individualistic , i.e.., egocentric and narcissistic, is a product of a cultural condition he called the "cultural

individualistic movement" characteristic of the traditions of 18th century liberalism and American democracy (Dewey, 1939). The "liberalism" Dewey disdained so vehemently is the outgrowth of several social forces, two of which, Locke's "natural rights" philosophy and the doctrine of laissez-faire, he found particularly inimical. The "natural rights" philosophy of the late 1600's which created the belief that individual needs were primary, and the laissez-faire doctrine which gave rise to an individual economic blindness were, for Dewey, primarily responsible for the polarization of individual and the social. Even the Church, with its emphasis on the salvation of the *individual* soul seemed to add to the invention of polarity (Dewey, 1930).

The individualism Dewey insisted on is not the "old individualism" which held the interests and rights of the individual as primary. This "old individualism," had its roots in the individualistic sentiments which rose to prominence in 18th and 19th century England and France. This particular brand of individualism, he felt, gave power and freedom to few. In Chapter V of Individualism: Old and New (1929) he provides us with a sketch of the "new Individualism" which stresses the interconnections of the "vast complex of associations" in the modern technological world. These connections, he insisted, introduce harmony and cohesiveness to the state of society.

This "old" individualism, Dewey writes, is the consequence of medieval and feudal institutions, institutions which were the means of accomplishing the eternal happiness of the soul, and the secular industrial revolution which fostered the belief that the essential characteristic of all individuals was a motivation for personal gain. Under the influence of Protestantism, individual capitalism, a natural rights philosophy, and morals based on "strictly individual traits and values" flourished. The American version of this individualism took things a step further and "equated personal gain with social [economic and class] advance" (Dewey, 1929, pp.75-77).

The problem with this individualism, purported Dewey, is that in the modern, industrial and technological world, because institutions are run for private, personal

profit, institutional aims are not social aims. Industry and technology are private endeavors, avenues to personal, private, individual profit. Individual aims in this view, are "narrow" aims, purely driven by the motivation for individual monetary wealth and social class status. The interest in private profit created our "money culture," a culture which Dewey believed could not allow us to see, and thus address, our purposeful sociality.

Dewey's "new" individualism, in contrast, merged the personal with the social (Dewey, 1930). Dewey's individual should, in a sense, have an integrated individuality whose aims are not purely personal, nor purely social. Such an individuality, he insisted, is not a ready-made essentially human characteristic. It is a capacity for development which is always incomplete and evolving. Given this, it becomes absolutely critical for the environment to provide those conditions under which such potentialities can emerge and be confirmed. For Dewey, communication, intelligence and interaction appear to be those conditions necessary for the development of an integrated individual.

What we see in Dewey's concepts of individual, individualism, and individuality, is similar to what we saw in his construction of sociality. The terms appear to blend into each other, to be parts of a larger, more comprehensive human process. Each is something to be achieved; none is a fixed mold. None are absolute, but rather, relative. Nothing about each term seems automatic. It is as if "individual," "individuality," and "individualism" are but parts of a dynamic composite called human being.

This mutual dependence between the individual and the social which Dewey submits is characterized by a reciprocity of interests and varied inter- and intra- group actions. The individuals in Dewey's social unit share purposes, are mutually sympathetic and are loyal to the group's aims. The "worth" of the group can thus be measured by the degree to which interests are shared among group members and the cooperation with other groups. The "standard" for measuring the worth is one which assures that the ideal society is not the benchmark. Rather, Dewey's criteria avoids this extreme, suggesting a

"practicable" appraisal. Worth is thus assessed by the degree to which the interests consciously shared are "numerous and varied" and by "how full and free" the interactions are with other groups (Dewey, 1916, p.83). If there is minimal common interest between members and if that interest isolates the group, "barriers to free intercourse and communication of experience" are assured. Such barriers, asserts Dewey, make the group or social unit or society "undesirable." The more fruitful the association and intercourse between human beings, the greater their experience. The greater their experience, the more progressive an individual's growth. And progressive growth, according to Dewey, is the distinguishing trait of intelligence, a society's most important asset (Dewey, 1916, pp. 81-99).

It is important to consider the concept of autonomy here because of the implications its has for interaction, experience, and growth. If only certain individuals can be self-governing, or have the right to be self-directive, then Dewey's sociality is impossible. A sociality dependent on the ability of individuals to engage in multiple and varied interactions requires that autonomy not be a right bestowed upon some but rather, a certainty for all individuals and that autonomy not be defined as antithetical to interdependence. What is really at issue for Dewey, is an individual's freedom to engage in the action or experience, or in Dewey's vernacular, to engage in those "interactions" which give rise to intelligence.

Dewey's sociality necessarily requires the freedom to be autonomous. It must have those "positive conditions, forming the prevailing state of culture," which release individuals from "oppressions and repressions" (Dewey, 1939, p.7). In effect, it is a sociality which requires autonomy. In Deweyan sociality, it appears, individuals are free to self-direct, self-govern, or simply put, choose for themselves. It is the freedom of self-determination which must characterize Dewey's "autonomy," not a right to act as one chooses. To have the opportunity for self-determination, to be able to ascertain what I

want to do and to be able to act upon it, demands a vast and accessible experiential world to say the least.

But the ideal of autonomy deeply entrenched in Western liberal thought is problematic for feminists. Feminist critiques of individualism, argues Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, are specifically focused on individualism's emphasis on the autonomy of the individual. She writes that

> it is to individualism that we owe the model of autonomy, which so many feminist theorists are beginning to criticize as an inadequate image - much less goal - of human identity. (1991, p.140)

But why? Why is the ideal of an autonomous, self-reliant, self-ruling, self-directing and unrestricted person so problematic in feminist discourse? One can suggest that women could in theory successfully navigate this life principle and be the autonomous ideal beings our liberal tradition highly regards. This is the same tradition after all, which is rooted in the belief in the human ability to choose desired ends and demands that the state refrain from imposing upon individuals universal definitions of such things as happiness, good, health and prosperity. Why should feminists, feminists like bell hooks, find such a notion objectionable? Does not the liberal conception of autonomy contain some of the principles necessary for women to claim full and free participation in their worlds? But perhaps this vision of autonomy is part exaggerated fiction and part dark and dirty fact.

What are these fictions and facts and what part do they play in Dewey's notions of the individual and sociality?

Feminist theorists have de-mystified the concept of autonomy in a variety of ways. The concept of autonomy has been linked to the belief in the existence of a human nature. For feminists, this is an arbitrary assumption fashioned from male models of thought, especially those within the Greek, German idealistic and liberal philosophical traditions, which allow women to realize their personhood only as "conceptual men."

(Snitow, 1990, p.26) Such theories of human nature ascribe ideals of capacities and attributes which do not include women's experiences. As Lorraine Code comments:

> Feminists have been rightly concerned to contest the alleged 'naturalness' of many capacities and characteristics. There is no doubt that appeals to 'human nature'...derive as much from political interests as from straight forward observation and description. Received theories of human nature are commonly constructs of a privileged intellectual elite and consistently derived from its own experiences. (1991, p.43)

The very idea that humans have a nature, fixed in a masculine image and unalterable, suggests several things which are problematic for feminists, feminist educators and John Dewey.

Feminist critiques of such theories of human nature focus on the value of reason and its determination of social role occupancy. Those human nature theories which exclude women and slaves from the specific human ability to reason are part of an Aristotelian legacy which has many implications for women in particular and humanity in general. Woman's inability to reason necessarily limits her to certain social roles, roles which are within the functional social castes, roles which for her, are sex-specific. Such occupancy, argue feminists, socialize women and men differently, re-enforcing sex-roles and oppressive social orders (Grimshaw, 1986; Tong, 1991). In addition, such assignment by human type creates the kind of world where only certain human potentialities will be expressed, ignoring other human talents unseen or inhibited. For Dewey, who valued uniqueness and individuality, such a conception was unacceptable.

This idea of an inevitability of our 'natures' coupled with the assertion that the ideals of human potentiality are masculine, has other implications. For the feminist scholar it suggests that social roles will be determined by capacities expressed in relation to capacities valued. Traits highly regarded will become the reference point for all human expressions. Those falling short of the mark will be valued less, or minimally, classified as adjunct. A conception of a fixed human nature where the masculine is the referential criterion is the same as saying that sex is the determinant factor in human nature. If the

most valued ways of being are masculine, self/mind as an isolated, self-sufficient, inorganic entity, then what are the possibilities for women?

If reason is an inherent human trait but is either absent in women or if women are kept out of those roles in which reason is exercised, then women will always be less worthy. Given that reason is the most highly valued human trait and given that women perform roles outside the realm of reason, women can not possibly be highly regarded. Women are functional in this construction. We labor at those tasks necessary for human survival; we are not part of what is excellent or genuinely good. Our functional roles are devalued, so we, too, are less than the best, less than good. We are inferior to the superior rational man. We are mechanical and not intellectual.

Such a conception of human nature was rejected by Dewey on similar grounds. In Democracy and Education (1916) Dewey takes this conception to task specifically because it separates humanity into a "laboring" class and a "leisure" class, a distinction which segregated educational values as well. The leisure class received a cultural education while the laborers learned what was utilitarian. This distinction, he argued, is not the result of something absolute or intrinsic. Rather, it is a function of historical and social forces. Dewey attacked the notion that rationality was a natural and complete power in human beings primarily on the grounds that such a conception dismissed or disregarded "the influence of habit, instinct, and emotions, as operative factors in life" (Dewey, 1916, p.299). In a discussion about moral philosophies which denied the social quality of reason, Dewey expresses his disagreement with the idea that logic or reason can be complete because it is natural when he writes that "bare logic [can't] spin new subject matter out of itself" (1916, p.299). In his view, reason is "just the ability to bring the subject matter of prior experience to bear to perceive the significance of the subject matter of a new experience" (p.343). Reason is a potential, an ability, a capacity for Dewey. It is neither fixed nor complete.

Given his naturalistic convictions, Dewey also had to reject the idea that mind/self transcended the organic. This rejection and his belief that mind emerges when the body is involved in interdependent experiences, allows for the possibility that roles need not be determined by a preordained set of criteria, but rather, that they develop through experiences, relationships, and associations. He makes this clear in Human Nature and Conduct (1922) when he rejects the "emphasis on states of consciousness and an inner private life" because it negates and is "at the expense of acts [all of which] have public meaning and exact social relationships" (p.86). If this is the case, then mind develops through action and not from a contrived spiritual providence, an indication that women's roles in Dewey's scheme may not be limited by virtue of their sex. For if mind must emerge from action and not from predetermination, then anyone who is experiencing, acting and engaging can develop mind and consequently, take part in chosen social roles. But the availability of choice is a key element here. Will Dewey's women have free choice? Will they be genuinely autonomous?

Freedom to choose among alternatives, associations and interactions is central to Dewey's entire philosophy. If individuals, in order to develop those attributes of individuality and sociality so important to Dewey, need the "full and free" interplay with multiple forms of association (Dewey, 1916, p.83), how can choice be arbitrarily limited? Dewey would consider such limitations "coercion" played out in economic, psychological and moral policies. He comments that the "very fact of exclusion from participation is a subtle form of suppression" (Ratner, 1939, p.401). Such suppression it would follow, would not allow for the full development of the individual and the social unit. Arbitrary schemes of social action which suppress the range of individuals' associations seem contradictory to Deweyan goals.

Since Dewey's rejection of the view of human nature as a given and constant is the result of his conviction that the value of individuals can not be assessed by "some prior principle" such as "family and birth or race and color or position of material wealth"

or by "the position and rank a person occupies in the existing social scheme" (Ratner, 1939, p.402), we can assume that all social roles would be open to women. Though he neglects to include sex as a "prior principle," Dewey believed so strongly in the potential of each human being, and stated very clearly that oppressive social arrangements were the results of actions taken by the autocratic and authoritarian few who believed that the intelligence necessary for choice was confined to a pre-ordained group, Dewey must include sex as a "prior principle," even if it goes unstated. If Dewey was true to his own philosophy, he could not ignore the reality of women's lives and experiences, and as a supporter of suffrage, there is evidence to suggest that he was certainly cognizant of at least one aspect of women's subordinate social position (Dewey, 1911). "The right to control the conduct of others" by "the preordained few" was for Dewey, a rejection of the true meaning of freedom and the right to equality (Ratner, 1939, p.402).

In both a feminist and Deweyan scheme, sociality and individuality have common aims. This integration is supported in both cases by a reconceptualization of freedom and equality and both suggest that the natures of the group and of the individual are somehow synchronized. This synchronization is what can prove to be of educative value for feminist educational theorists. But what models are given for such a social unit, for such a group? What are their ideals? Both feminist and Deweyan concepts of group stress solidarity, connectedness, common will and the integrity of the individual, but what sets them apart is their parentage.

Dewey's fraternity is part of the triumvirate "symbols of the highest ethical ideal" (1888,p.23); liberty and equality are the other thirds. His concept of fraternity, rich in the ideals of the French Enlightenment and Jeffersonian democracy, contained the ideals of group association for a common purpose, interest or pleasure. But unlike the tradition of fraternity that synthesized Kantian liberalism and the 18th century notion of social contract, individuals in Dewey's fraternal unions would not hold inalienable rights. As

previously discussed, such a group would not be entitled to suppress individuals or other groups.

Would a sororial conceptualization of group have similar attributes? Certainly there is an element of common interests and purposes in sorority and ideals parallel to those of a Deweyan community. A "community of interests, shared beliefs, and goals around which to unite", "appreciation for diversity" (hooks, 1991,p.40) and shared pleasures are all aspects of the group dynamic feminists call "sisterhood." But what makes one uneasy about both of these is, as previously stated, their parentage, their sex-specific connotation, and in the case of sorority, the possibility that its model was the Enlightenment's fraternity.

Where, within our feminist frameworks, can we find that example of sociality that consists of those conditions Dewey deemed necessary for the development of the integrated individual? In what social medium do we find shared purposed, mutuality, and loyalty to shared aims? What exists as an "avenue" for Deweyan sociality in our daily lives? Is friendship, and in particular, feminist friendship between women, that relationship where Dewey's individuals, autonomous and related, inter-and intra-dependent, can develop dynamic sociality?

Janice Raymond writes in A Passion for Friends: Toward a Philosophy of Female Affection (1986), her book on female friendship, that female friendship is the "foundation for and consequence of feminism" (1986, p.13) and "part of the history of feminist discernment"(p.20). Inspired and motivated by women's search for meaning, female friendship seems to be a means through which women have attained an understanding of their circumstances and their possibilities.

"Chosen, negotiated, achieved, not simply given" connections between women (Martin, B.,1988, p.96) have taken many forms throughout time and space. In 19th and 20th century North America, quilting groups, settlement houses, women's clubs, and consciousness raising groups all exemplify sisterhood. Though the purposes and

objectives of each group varied, it appears that the running thread throughout each of these groups, and many others where women gathered in the absence of men, was the desire to, and importance of, making connections with those with whom experiences and meanings were shared. Within these sororities, many of the constraints and obstacles to self-expression, learning, and female relatedness which existed in women's lives were erased. Women came together not just for individual self-renewal or affirmation. Often, women's clubs arose out of an idea of "female fellowship" which would "work to elevate the moral character of society" or, as in the case of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, "organize virtuous womanhood so as to transform the masculine world, to have feminine traits counterbalance men's brutal and animal qualities." Their founder, Frances Willard, made it clear that the WCTU was not out to have women compete with men, but to reform them (Rothman, 1978, p.64-67).

Perhaps most importantly, many women's clubs, unions and organizations sought to provide the opportunities for women to form and maintain female friendships where a "sense of freedom" prevailed and where religious and political differences would not dissolve common interests. Cultivating a "spirit of unity" among members was central to these unions (Rothman, 1978, p.64-66). The General Federation of Women's Clubs founded in 1892 and Sorosis, in 1868, served all of these purposes but their existence alone was evidence of the value of female friendship in a reality hostile to such bonds.

What distinguishes female friendship bonds from those of brotherhood? from those between women and men? What is it about female friendship that makes it such a good example of effective sociality in practice?

These questions suggest the possibility that the answers may lie within the philosophical confines of essentialism or determinism, a possibility which has implications for this thesis. If we proceed from the position that the bonds of female friendship are consequences of an essential female nature, we will be unable to defend female friendship as an effective model for human learning on multiple grounds. An

essentialist posture in this case would dismiss the possibility that female friendship attributes could (and should) be part of all human associations, regardless of the sex of the participants. This same posture would prevent us from maintaining the integrity of the individual. And if our point of philosophical departure demands an essential nature that is sex specific, then communion with the other sex can never be fulfilling, productive and purposeful; interactions and associations with the other sex can never be educative.

Lorraine Code's criticism of such an essentialist position addresses these very concerns. She charges the essentialist theorist with denying the "pitfalls of female essentialism" which entrust women with stereotypically female traits, serving only to relegate and confine women to roles which perpetuate their inferior social status (Code, 1991, p.54). Such confinement doesn't fit comfortably within a feminist framework such as ours. That women, all women, could have "an essence, an inherent, natural, eternal nature" (p.17) which was responsible for the vitality of their friendships, is a conviction we must disregard, if not solely on the basis of the evidence that points to the occurrence of difference among women, then on the possibility that essentialist dogma may invite oppression.

What we are left with is the position that feminine attributes, and in this specific case, those attributes necessary for genuine friendship, are socio-cultural constructions. This is the philosophical disposition which will ground this discussion of female friendship as living model of sociality. A biologically determined posture would disqualify such friendship as model simply because men would necessarily be ineligible. Feminism must, in my view, be rooted in reality, and reality comes in two sexes.

It is from a socio-cultural constructivist perspective that Janice Raymond develops her thesis on female friendship. In A Passion for Friends: Toward a Philosophy of Female Affection (1986), Raymond states simply that women don't have a "biological edge on the more humane qualities of human existence" (p.21). For Raymond, it is the conditions and realities of women's lives which create the "social trust" called female

friendship. The attraction of women for women is for Raymond "neither natural nor ontological" but the manifestation of a desire to recognize relatedness in patriarchal realities. The "hetero-reality" of women's lives, contends Raymond, places women in social, political and economic associations which are "ordained" by men and are only woman-to-man associations (pp.5-8). Relatedness and freedom to choose relations are missing for women in such a scheme and thus the need for female friendship. Female friendship, then, emerges from "women's search for meaning" about herself and others like herself (p.20).

Female friendship's starting point is for Raymond, the "companionship of Self", the experience of knowing oneself as a unique individual. It is a "Self" which Raymond's defines as an "authentic" self which women are "recreating". It is not a self which is "grafted" onto women by patriarchy (Raymond, 1986, p.4). Given that Raymond believes in a socio-cultural construction of woman, we can take her use of the term "Self" not be be an essential self but rather, an identity which women construct individually and which isn't prescribed by patriarchal forces. For Raymond to say that the female Self is "authentic" and constantly being recreated by woman, she infers not that an essential self is present, but that a self constructed by and for woman is possible.

It is the "affinity a woman has with her vital Self" that enables her to care about others like herself (Raymond, 1986, p.5-6). This may hint at a kind of self-knowledge and appreciation that is self-serving and individualistic but I don't think that Raymond is suggesting this at all. On the contrary, the assertion is that through a real knowledge of Self, a meaningful knowledge, one is able to reason and consider the Self in relation to others. The real self, discovered through thinking, is uniquely fundamental and original, yet consonant with others, and not obsessively self-involved (1986, p.222). Further, given Raymond's socio-cultural constructivist position, we can conclude that knowing the Self is not solely the province of women, further solidifying the case made for female friendship as model of genuine sociality.

To engage in positive relatedness or association then, one must know oneself. But given the patriarchal realities women have experienced, how have women been able to accomplish this if at all? Certainly women have encountered socio-culturally constructed obstacles which prevent them from genuine Self-awareness. How have women scaled these barriers? Clearly, Raymond contends, women found others like them and engaged in a shared process of Self-discovery.

Raymond's belief that women's attraction for other women rests on this very point. It is a matter of Self-survival to engage in freely chosen association with those who share your concerns, affinities, etc. But this relationship is not one-directional. Raymond's female friendships are dialectical. There's an integration, a healthy dynamic between Self and Others, between individual and group. As a "social trust," these friendships involve "reciprocal assurances based on honor, loyalty and affection" (Raymond, 1986, p.9), a trust which I assert is extremely rare between women and men given our well-practiced patriarchal ethos. That female friendships have managed to get beyond socio-cultural barriers, or what Raymond calls the "female state of atrocity" (1991, p.350), is testament to the strength of the human "longing for relatedness" (Noddings, 1984, p.104) and self-affirmation. Somehow, women have known that given the realities of patriarchy, the coming together of women in the absence of men allows for the freeing and subsequent affirmation of Self.

As "an understanding that is continually renewed [and] revitalized" (Raymond, 1986, p.9), female friendship demands conditions conducive for individual and shared growth. Raymond puts forth four such necessary conditions: thoughtfulness, passion, worldliness and happiness.

It is through thinking that a person can discover her real Self. It is thinking restored of thoughtfulness, however. Raymond views thinking as theory and thoughtfulness as theory applied, theory practiced. Searching for meaning is thinking; thoughtfulness, injects into thinking's rational orientation, a consideration and caring for

others and respect for their needs. Knowledge without meaning is useless for association. It is simply "know-how" and lacks the thoughtful experience of knowing "why" something or someone is so (Raymond, 1986, p.218).

Because Raymond's female friendship begins with knowing the Self, thinking about oneself must be a fundamental necessity of female friendship, and such is the case. Raymond emphasizes what she calls the "duality of thinking...that is, the duality of 'myself with myself'...the one who asks and the one who answers" (1986, p.222). In Raymond's view, such meaningful thinking will enable conversation with Others because in understanding Self, we understand our need for association. Each participant in friendship conducts the same personal dialogue, setting up the dialectical movement where being an "original Self" and a friend simultaneously is possible. Thinking individuals then, maintain their integrity while at the same time, attaining group membership through friendship. Intelligent (thoughtful) thinking communicated and shared will undoubtedly lead to intelligent action, a formula which Dewey would find made-to-order.

A "thinking heart" is the manifestation of another condition, that of passion, for Raymond's female friendship. A "thoughtful passion," according to Raymond, does not place thinking and passion at polar ends. Instead, their integration and connection allow for the positive action that ensures the growth of both the individual and the friendship (Raymond, 1986, pp. 223-225). To influence, to act on, to move and impress and in turn, to be influenced by, acted upon, moved and impressed by others, is the thoughtful Gyn/affection of female friendships (1986, p.8). For Raymond, friendship that is distinguished by "thoughtful passions ensures that a friend does not lose her Self in the heightened awareness of and attachment to another" (p.225).

Friendship provides a location in the public and private worlds of our realities and this, contends Raymond, is a critical significance for female friendship. Both a personal and political space, worldliness seems to be the practiced intelligent, passionate action of

female friends. It is both personal and political and it must be given female friendship's relational thinking. Engaged in association, the Self transcends the alleged boundaries between private and public and acknowledges both direct and indirect consequences of association. In a sense, Raymond's worldiness underscores Dewey's contention that we do not exist as solitary beings whose involvement is inconsequential or unimportant. For women, Raymond's worldliness introduces her Self as female Self to man-made political space and her subsequent participation thus becomes meaningful. The worldly woman, then, lives with integrity in the world.

But Raymond also adds that it is woman's worldliness which enables her to maintain the feminist vision necessary to change those aspects of the world's realities which are unfriendly to her. This positions the individual, in this case, woman, as agent for change, agency which "acts with respect to the other on the basis of shared understanding" (Gould, 1988, p.75). Such agency, allows for the fuller development of the individual and in turn, the social unit. Involvement in social action does not suppress the individual, allowing new capacities to develop and perhaps enact change. Dewey's individual by definition must be a participant, must experience, must be provided the opportunities for growth. "Worldliness" as it exists in Raymond's female friendships accomplishes all of this, though granted, does so only for women. So for Raymond's female friendship to be truly compatible with Deweyan sociality, it must be available to men. Though Raymond's model for sociality is sex-based, it does not mean that its values will be unavailable to men. Let's remember that Raymond believes that socialization has been largely responsible for, and influential in, building female friendships.

Striving for the integrity of Self is process whose goal is to ascertain and achieve the full use of one's powers (Raymond, 1986, p.238). Female friendships have historically given women the private and public contexts in which to realize this goal, a goal Raymond defines as "happiness". Most importantly and pertinent to our discussion of

Dewey, female friendship "provides encouragement and environment for the full use of one's powers" (1987, p.238).

"To find out what one is fitted to do and to secure an opportunity to do it is the key to happiness," writes Dewey in Democracy and Education (1916, p.308). For Dewey, "nothing is more tragic" than to know what one's purposes are and then to find that one has been "forced by circumstance into an uncongenial calling" (Dewey, 1916, p.308). Are not Dewey and Raymond in harmony here? In order to attain happiness, Dewey's individual is engaged "full and free" associations which promise self-realization and actualization. It would appear that the worldly environment provided women in female friendship does the same.

Thus, the cognitive nature of such friendship emerges: a relationship of reciprocity, it enables each individual to grow from the association. Even its continuation requires knowledge. Friends are participating in a relational process that demands continued mutual understanding. By continuing to know each other, friends present each other with the opportunities for growth, chances to experience and understand new ideas, and to engage in new associations. This vision of friendship provides us with the conditions necessary for the fuller and freer interactions that Dewey so strongly demands. In this light, friendship keeps the individual unique while still integrating the individual with others. Dewey would look favorably on such a vision.

What follows is an attempt to put my theory to a test, to examine the pragmatic verity of my suspicions, and to gain insight for further theorizing and further examination. The following is an introductory litmus test for this feminist educational theory. The following is reconnaissance for this feminist theoretical, the corroboration of a heuristic hunch..

"Testing" Theory:

Method

Purposeful Sampling and Demographics (Appendices A and B)

Participants were recruited from enrolled students in five undergraduate classes at Grinnell College in the Fall 1993 semester. Participation was voluntary; some instructors offered extra credit for participation; other instructors offered participation as an alternative to a course requirement. In sum, 49 students participated in the study, 43 women and 6 men. Because participation in the study was linked to extra course credit or course requirement substitution, men were eligible for participation but their data were not included in the study. Female participants included 7 seniors, 17 juniors and 20 sophomores. Given the study's focus on established close female friendships, it was decided that no first year/first semester women would be included in the analysis. This participant restriction was necessary because first year/first semester women are not "information rich cases that manifest the phenomenon of [close female college friendship] intensely" (Patton, 1990, p. 171). For such intensity sampling (Patton, 1990), first year/first semester women were clearly ineligible. This point proved moot given that no first year/first semester women were enrolled in the five courses selected for participant recruitment. Ages of the participants ranged from 18 years to 23 years with the vast majority (93%) between the ages of 19 and 21.

Unfortunately, racial and ethnic distribution within the pool of participants made it impossible to speculate about differences between and across all racial/ethnic groups represented in the sample. For example, only one Latina and no Asian American women participated in the study. It was hoped that the participation by four African American women would allow for some discussion on these particular African-American college women's friendships but given the cursory responses by each of the four African-American women and the limits of a standardized open-ended interview (Patton, 1991,

p.287), I gleaned little insight into the cognitive character of their friendships. . Much the same can be said of the distribution of heterosexual, bisexual and lesbian participants: Two women self-identified as bi-sexual, 3 women as lesbian and 38 as heterosexual.

Data Collection

Participants were asked to share their perceptions about their friendships with college women by completing a questionnaire and answering several standardized open-ended questions posed by trained interviewers. Participants were told that the entire exercise would take no more than 50 minutes, a time determined by pre-tests during the preceding summer. No participant expressed the need for extra time nor did anyone suggest that the time allotted was inadequate. All participants were asked to read the introductory page of the questionnaire explaining the purpose of the study, their rights and responsibilities, and confidentiality (Appendix C). Participants were reminded throughout the questionnaire that they should "choose <u>one</u> particular close female friend who attends this college" as the basis for their responses.

The questionnaire consisted of five open-ended/multiple response questions designed to solicit from participants the topics of their conversations with their friends and words used to describe intellectual and academic properties of their friendships. These items were constructed for the purposes of testing their perceptions of these friendships against Raymond's model of female friendship (1986) and as sources of comparison for the standardized open-ended interview. The addition of a 13 item Likert scale served as a final source of comparison for the interview. The items on the scaled response section reflect conceptions of learning as discussed in Marton, Dall'alba and Beaty (1993). The use of these different types of measures (open-ended/multiple response questions, scaled responses, open-ended question interview) was an attempt at triangulation and convergence as discussed in Ahern and Baker (1990) and Patton (1991).

Many of the qualitative research features employed in this study were informed by techniques suggested in Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Bogdan and Biklen (1982).

Data Analysis

Each questionnaire was reviewed to make sure that all entries to all questions were legible. Entries for Questions 1 through 5 which could not be recognized were discarded. Each entry for each of the five questions were then recorded and tallied.

Question 1 ("What ten words would you use to describe your relationship?") and Question 2 ("Think of the same close female college friend. What ten words characterize your conversations?") were coded for the conditions of female friendship discussed in Raymond (1986). In order to "test" for the feminist character of the relationship, two separate research teams coded the responses for: "thoughtfulness", defined by Raymond as the ability to reason with considerateness and caring; "worldliness", a term used to describe a friend's position as "inside outsider" in college culture; and "passion", a term Raymond defines as the thinking heart which "move[s], stir[s], influence[s], and affect[s]" the other woman (Raymond, 1990, p. 218-229). Responses were coded as "Questionable" by both teams if no agreement could be reached among team members. A final list of coded responses was produced by comparing each team's codes, discussing questionable responses and coming to agreement on responses which had been coded differently across teams. Final response distribution can be found in Appendix B.

Responses to Question 3 ("What do you and this close friend talk about?") were coded in the same way as Questions 1 and 2 according to the categories "intellectual", "academic" and "personal lives (Appendix E). These categories were an attempt to "test" the perception of the alleged tension between what participants perceive as intellectual and what they perceive as academic. These variables, or category sets, were chosen after researchers engaged in a process of data categorizing described in Lincoln and Guba (1985). These three emergent categories correlate with Johnson's and Aries' findings on

the composition of conversations between female friends (1983). Research teams used marginal tabulation categories (Borg & Gall, 1983) to code responses to both Question 4 ("What words would you use to characterize the role you play in each other's intellectual growth?") and Question 5 ("What words would you use to characterize the role you each play in each other's academic performance?"). The distribution of responses can be found in Appendices F and G.

Responses to the last component of the questionnaire, the 13 item Likert scale, were tallied within question and across category (Appendix H). In addition, a percentage of "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" responses was calculated for each of the 13 items.

Immediately upon the completion of the questionnaire, participants were asked to read descriptions of two sets of friendships (Appendix C) and to take a few minutes to think about these relationships. Participants were then asked to engage in a semi-structured, limited survey taped interview (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transcripts of the tapes were compiled and emergent data categories were developed. Data categories and their descriptions were given to research assistants who coded interview responses according to the categories.

Discussion

In order to assess how college women view the academic and intellectual value of their female friendships, it was first necessary to address the following questions: (1) What principal property of these friendships can be studied to assess the learning and cognitive value of these relationships? (2) How do we identify learning? (3) What are the characteristics and functions of friendship? (4) What are the characteristics and functions of college friendships? (5) What are the characteristics and functions of female friendships? These questions, or more specifically their answers, offer this inquiry the examination site (their conversations), the qualities specific to learning relationships (increasing information, reproducing knowledge, applying knowledge, gaining meaning,

taking on a different perspective and changing as a person) (Marton, Dall'alba, & Beaty, 1993), and the qualities specific to friendships between women and friendships between college students (personal change and growth, understanding reality).

To identify the site of our inquiry into the learning character of college women's friendships took no great insight. As I watched and listened to women students huddled in the snack bar or clustered outside my classroom door, or recalled how it was that I learned anything through my women friends, it was apparent that central to female friendships is their talk, their conversations. As Fern Johnson and Elizabeth Aries discuss in their article "The Talk of Women Friends" (1983), "talk is the substance of women's friendships"; it is the "central feature of women's friendships" (p.354). It is in talk, in conversation with women friends, that women's intellectual abilities and potential are respected. According to Johnson and Aries, it is in conversation with each other that women friends "develop a sense of inner security and self-esteem" (p. 355). Thus, I can suggest that it is in the talk of college women with each other that we can begin to understand the learning character, the cognitive value of these relationships.

If the conversation of these college women is the variable isolated to gain an understanding of the learning character of these relationships, what criteria can be used to assess their educative status? What are the conceptions of learning that need to be observed or isolated in the conversation of college female friends, what purposes do these friendships serve, and what meanings are given to these aims?

In Marton's, Dall'alba's and Beaty's (1993) updating of Saljo's (1979) phenomenographical study on the conceptualization of learning, university students were interviewed in order to "give more precise characterization of the differing conceptions of learning" and to "identify relationships between the conceptions" (Marton, Dall'alba & Beaty, 1993, p. 279). Saljo's initial findings had suggested that students recognized learning as academic in nature and that learning was about the increase of knowledge, about memorizing, the acquiring facts or skills, understanding meaning and the

interpretation of reality (Saljo, 1979). Students interviewed by Marton et. al. reiterated Saljo's five categories with one addition: learning as changing as a person. When one finds a new way of seeing phenomena, it means that you see the world or an aspect of it differently. This new view or "seeing the world differently means that you change as a person" (Marton, Dall'alba & Beaty, 1993, p.292).

These six conceptualizations of learning are analogous to Solano's (1986) functions of friendship and Blieszner's and Adams' (1992) descriptions of the cognitive processes resident in adult friendships. Solano submits that friendships functions to meet certain needs. Meeting such needs as information provides friends with a feeling of security while meeting such cognitive needs as conversation, ideas and experiences provides a way of assessing self. Emotional needs such as acceptance, trust and love are also met through friendship. Blieszner's and Adams' (1992) survey of the literature on adult friendship reveals that integral to the cognitive processes involved in adult friendships is the requirement of "ongoing growth and change" (p.62).

What of friendships between women?

In her "structural description" of friendships between women, Carol Becker (1987) posits that women's friendships with each other involve a maturing dialogue between autonomous but interdependent agents, and are relationships which provide "a context for each woman becoming herself, personally and interpersonally" (p.65). Here again we find that friendship between women is a site for growth, growth which results from an "evolving dialogue" between interdependent agents.

In Johnson's and Aries' (1983) examination of the talk of women friends several themes emerge which reinforce Becker (1987) and Marton, Dall'alba & Beaty (1993). Johnson and Aries found that women friends engage in non-critical listening, describe the relationship as supportive and interdependent; women friends reported that they positively affect each other's self worth, and view each other as necessary for self-discovery and growth (p.357-358).

Thus, what previous research on learning, learning relationships, women's and college students' friendships suggest is that for college women's friendships to be educative, to be a site for college women's intellectual and academic development, these relationships must provide college women a site for assessing meaning of self and of reality, a site for the experience of different perspectives and viewpoints, and an opportunity for growth through interdependency.

From the data on the women who participated in this particular study at Grinnell College we see similar themes emerging and more importantly, themes which resonate with Raymond's (1986) conception of female friendship.

Let me briefly outline what emerges from this study:

There are few direct, consciously articulated connections between the intellectual purposes of participants' conversations and their academic performances (only 9 of the 46 women interviewed directly articulated this connection). This phenomenon occurred despite the emergence of nearly identical themes when asked to talk about what academic purposes and what intellectual purposes their conversations serve. The occurrence of such parallel themes suggests that intellectual and academic purposes are not at odds or situated as dichotomous halves of a learning whole. If anything, it suggests that intellectual and academic learning are in concert in this relationship; this is a suggestion which implies that if the academic is conceptualized as an individualized enterprise and the intellectual is a relational process, which their data suggest they are, then the site of this reconciliation--female friendship-- is that site in which feminist learning can and does take place.

Emergent Themes

Six themes emerged from the interviews; themes drawn from the responses to the following questions: "What purposes do you think that conversations with your close female friend serve academically?" and "What purpose do you think that conversations with you close female friend serve intellectually?". For these college women, their

conversations with their female friend served as (1) a respite from academic stress and anxiety; (2) as validation and support of their thinking and their ideas; (3) as testing sites for ideas; (4) as risk-free testing sites for their ideas; (5) as a source for different and diverse perspectives; and (6) as sources of information and advice.

Most often, these themes emerged from similar responses across the two questions but subtle differences suggest that the intellectual purposes of these conversations are more about growth from association, identity development, and non-performative characteristics, while the academic purposes appear to be about performance, individual validation, resources acquisition and hiatus.

Respite From Academic Stress

As a respite from academic stress and anxiety, these conversations do serve different purposes depending on whether they were identified as "academic" or "intellectual". For example, comments such as: "we keep one another from going too hard," and "it's really a stress reliever," and

> "she stops me from being too intense. I have a tendency to be way over intense and so she comes down and makes me stop reading for awhile. And that's probably a healthy thing academically."

indicate that the relationship is a site where academic performance isn't demanded nor expected. These conversations seem to be places free of the anxiety and stress producing performative elements of academics--tests, papers, presentations, class participation. Somehow these college women's talk is not perceived to be evaluated nor evaluative in this friendship relationship. When the theme emerges as a response to the intellectual purposes of their talk, the following is the typical response:

> "to stimulate me to go out...and read a different book or we actually hand the book to the other person; then to question things like the existence of God or something more interesting than just the academic..."

It appears that this type of hiatus is not about safe-haven from the academic onslaught but about an opportunity for cognitive growth. Somehow, "thinking" within the intellectual conversation is not about performance but about the freedom from judgment.

Risk-Free Test Sites

This same subtlety rang true when participants talked about these conversations as risk-free testing sites for ideas. Often, participants would present their conversations as opportunities to try out ideas related to a class in a "safe" environment, an environment free of criticism and directed argumentation. Not the following entries:

> "it's nice to have someone that you can talk to about ideas and not worry about being shot down in an academic setting"
>
> "we do create kind of a safe environment for one another"
>
> "comparing them with conversations I have with my male friends, they are challenging; they might challenge my position but at the same time not in a combative way."
>
> "just talking it out is good for me, in a comfortable environment and to be able to say something in an environment where I know I won't be killed, yelled at or something."
>
> "she offers critiques but not criticism, direct criticism."

Yet when asked about the intellectual purposes of their conversations, participant comments within this theme were not about performative safety. Instead, their comments suggested that these conversations were sites for intellectual play:

> "we're trying ideas on each other just for the sake of ideas. It's not to help academics.."
>
> "You can try out new ideas and stuff...it would allow me to try out this new theory I learned in class..."
>
> "...clarifying my ideas on things and...I get new ideas from her..."
>
> "It's just a more comfortable way of expressing ideas or different thoughts about things which is a good way of rethinking or restructuring different things I've learned..."

To suggest that these female friendships are sites of intellectual play is to suggest that for these women, friendship learning has an interactive, independent, informal and unbound quality that sets it apart from learning in their conditional, self-supported and sustained classrooms. Perceived as personally academically inconsequential, this learning, this

intellectual practice and play, seems to provide a bridge between cognitive self and college.

Source of Information and Advice

Perhaps the most striking difference between the intellectual vs. the academic purposes of their conversations resides in the conceptualization of conversation as a source of information and advice. These conversations seem to serve as both pragmatic academic resources--advice about course requirements and responsibilities--and as a site for identity construction and self-assessment. Note the following sample of the responses to the question regarding academic purposes:

> "We give each other advice about classes or how to deal with the workload....how to go about preparing for class... We usually do a lot of explaining, a lot of clarifying...things that have to do with grammar and things of that nature."
>
> "I had to make a presentation in an education class and I went over it with her first."
>
> "she's taken this class before me and so academically it's very nice to have someone who's taken the class already."

And the responses to the question about intellectual purposes:

> "We do talk about the role of women and the society and where we are [in it]."
>
> "it's intellectually rewarding that I learn things about myself. I learn, I question things about myself that I might not otherwise do. Like I question why I'm going to college, what I'm doing after college."
>
> "we'll pick up different things from what's going on...and say "look, did you know this?"...and whatever's going on--bring it out and check out if it's worth knowing."
>
> "I think that we've both gotten a lot out of our relationship--like growing as a person and changing who you are."
>
> "I can be telling a story I've told a hundred times before and suddenly it sounds differently. I think about it and she asks the right questions and you get a little more in depth. And it's very good. I learn a lot about myself. I learn a lot about her."

> "I think that she causes me to question myself a lot...because she'll ask why I have that view and it turns out that it's something I've never really asked myself."
>
> "allowed me to become more of a political person...I hadn't formulated my feminist identity yet so that was something she was in part responsible for-helping me do that. And I think that I helped her do that a little bit too."
>
> "it helps me to learn more about myself, learn more about other people when I have conversations where [there's] a completely different perspective..."
>
> "I think that intellectually our discussions help me kind of focus a little better or kind of place myself a little better. I kind of figure out a little better who I am in relation to the outer world outside of Grinnell."

It almost seems that when viewed as intellectual, these conversations are not a reaction to a situation, to an immediate performative reality. Instead, they are about some refinement or development of self-definition. The intellectual, here, is about self and <u>for</u> self while the academic appears to be about performing self for someone (a professor) or something (grades). Even when describing how these conversations serve as sites for the validation of ideas, when the ideas are about academics, these conversations serve as sights of risk-free practice. Intellectual validation of ideas, on the other hand, is about "nourishing and replenishing."

It appears, then, that for female friends in college, conversations with each other serve as vehicles to transgress the limits of dualistic thinking, of dichotomous ideology. I say this because it is in their conversations with each other that college women friends contest the boundaries of autonomous academic self and interdependent intellectual self. If intellectual work is non-performative and if academic work is performative, it becomes necessary to find some means of linking what these college women perceive to be separate cognitive spheres. Their conversations prove effective means; their friendship proves an effective site for this process.

But why the need for such a site? Why the need for such a means? The easy answer is to these questions is to remember the prevalence of an ideology in higher education which presents the academic as solely individual enterprise, as individual

performance, and as autonomous cognition. If the academic is perceived by college women as being about autonomy and self-directed performance--as the women who participated in our query suggest it does--and they define the intellectual as an interdependency with trusted, supportive, nurturing friend; and they maintain that they are intellectual independents as well--as the women who participated in our query suggest it does--then college women's friendships are sites where learning is an interdependent activity where self is not perceived as lost. There is no "loss of Self" in learning relation; there is a "thoughtful passion [which] ensures that a friend does not lose her Self in the heightened awareness of and attachment to another" or another's ideas or perspectives (Raymond, 1986, p.225).

Afterthoughts

What are the implications of the realization of the educative power of female friendships for higher education systems? What are the implications for higher education's pedagogies, curricula and cultural lives?

Pedagogies, even feminist pedagogies in higher education, will need to reconsider the value of familiarity and interdependency among women students. Are these relationships sources for academic success? How can they be identified and put to good use? One suggestion is that we consider ways to provide opportunities for these conversations where possible; another is to validate their intellectual and academic worth in public discourse; and perhaps as a first step, college women's friendships can serve as models for educational research on the dynamics of autonomy and interdependence.

Let's first consider this last suggestion:

As a means for dissolving the boundaries between the academic and the intellectual, and as a place where autonomy and interdependence are in dynamic exercise, female friendships provide the models for peer-assisted learning in higher education. As pointed out by Alexander, Gur, and Patterson (1974), peer-assisted learning is an "often

neglected but potent resource inherent in a student population" (175). Their studies reaffirm the suspicion that arbitrary partnerships within pedagogical practices are problematic and that success of these learning partnerships was attributed to the friendship (p.179). What can educational research learn from female friendships regarding the development, function and practice of group or dyadic learning? Can educational research on group or collaborative learning glean anything from female friendship? Are there salient cognitive qualities that college women's friendships can offer to collaborative learning theorists? For example, if one of the more bothersome burrs in the collaborative learning theoretics is the conflict between individualistic tendencies and the requirement for interdependence, can college women's friendships' reconciliation of this tension provide any insight into this educational quandary?

If Perry's (1978;1981) conclusions which suggest that intellectual development among college and university students relies strongly on supportive relationships are correct, and if Astin's (1992) assessment that peer group is the most important influence on academic and cognitive growth in post-secondary students, then it would seem reasonable that college and university systems consider the efficacy of environmental conditions which encourage add support female friendships. This is, in my thinking, should be a central concern of the cocurriculum, of personnel in student services, and especially so for those professionals working to create intellectually supportive environments for women on coeducational campuses.

Does the institution provide the necessary time for the development of such friendships and the space for their conversations? If curricular demands are such that they busy women with individual work, leaving them little time for female friendship development, can women's intellectual worlds ever expand on college campuses? Will their academic performances be thwarted?

Does the institution give evidence that such partnerships are important and valued? Does the institution, for example, publicly prize women's intellectual

partnerships just as it does football? Does the institution revere sorority in the same way that it does fraternity? Are women's team sports, for example, as central to the institution's identity? Much the same can be said about our course content and strategies. I often find, for example, that using text, essays or studies done by friendship collaborations, and making a point of their collaboration and intellectual interdependence, is received as a message of validation. Curricula is also changed and impacted in this way.

The next step in this testing of an educational theoretical--my heuristic hunch-- is to design a more intensive naturalistic interview project which can thicken our description and understandings of the impact of these female friendships on academic performance and intellectual growth. Of particular concern is to expand the participant pool in order to address the intersections of race, class, ethnicity and sexuality identities in this dynamic. For example, is it the case that minority women friends see the academic and intellectual purposes of these friendships as qualitatively different than the dominant groups? Is the lesbian student's female friendship about an intimacy that is particular to her identity?

For now, this reconnaissance for the theoretical suggests that there's something worth knowing about the cognitive power of these relationships, that *there's gold in them there hills*. As feminist educational theorists and practitioners, I suggest we take our expedition further.

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